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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2014

Thieves target rescuers

POCOMAR has had one of its vessel's engines stolen.
Page 5

A dog's life

A local dog has its days with a No. 2 Canadian ranking.
Page 12

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Santa Claus comes to town



ALLAN BEHNER
/ QMI AGENCY
NAGARA

Santa arrived aboard his reindeer-pulled sleigh, as thousands watched from the roadside during Port Colborne's Santa Claus Parade, Saturday evening. See story on page 2.

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UPFRONT

CHRISTMAS

Plenty of spirit at Port Colborne parade

ALLAN BENNER
QMI Agency Niagara

The "festive, joyous" spirit of Port Colborne residents impressed new Mayor John Maloney as he walked Saturday night, participating in the city's annual Santa Claus Parade.

"It was fantastic. It was an excellent parade with more than 60 units," he said. "The crowds on the street were in some areas five people deep, and it was a very festive, joyous kickoff for the Christmas season here in Port Colborne."

The celebrations began Saturday afternoon when Santa arrived aboard a pilot boat, as hundreds of children awaited him on the canal bank.

From there, he led the children as they walked to the Guild Hall for an opportunity to share their Christmas wishes with him and enjoy holiday treats. Santa returned that night, rolling along the streets of the city aboard his sleigh as the last of more than

60 brightly decorated entries in the annual parade.

Maloney said the hundreds of people who gathered to watch the parade was nothing new in the city, which he said has shown a great deal of support for the event since the city started holding it in the evening.

"There's something about the lights and the glow that makes it much more festive. We've had excellent crowds over the last several years," he said. "The (people get) behind it and really get involved and really support our local community."

Relatively mild temperatures might have also contributed to the crowds during the parade, although some snow might have been nice too, he added. Even Santa lamented the lack of snow as he took part in the event, urging children to "be good" as he passed by.

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PHOTOS BY ALLAN BENNER / QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

A pilot boat carried Santa Claus to Port Colborne Saturday morning where he was greeted by hundreds of children gathered along the canal bank.



More than 60 floats, marching bands and other dazzling attracts rolled along the streets of Port Colborne Saturday evening during the Santa Claus Parade.



Several members of Quad Niagara participated in the Santa Claus Parade, adding lighted decorations to their ATVs.



■ I'VE BEEN THINKING

Crumbling foundations

PASTOR GARY TOMUCK

Wentworth Congregational Christian Church

There is a picture of a man painted by Michael Angelo on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

He is presented in a posture of despair. He looks like a man who has wept so long that he has no tears left to shed. He can no longer bear to see the condition of the world nor to see God's people suffer any longer. Who is this man?

He is Jeremiah, "The Weeping Prophet." He was commissioned to uproot by God to uproot, to tear down, to destroy and to overthrow. (4 negatives). To uproot is to dig up nations by the roots and turn them under. To tear down is like knocking down a city wall by overthrowing or demolishing it. (Jer. 1:10).

In the time of Nehemiah, the walls of Jerusalem were already knocked down. The people now had no protection, they were in great trouble and disgrace. How did Nehemiah respond to this situation? In Nehemiah 1:4 - "When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. Tears,

fasting and praying in this manner for the spiritual declension in the church, for the spiritual famine in this world and for the healing of our land should characterize each leader and each Christian who loves God and others. Will you pray? Lord break my heart for the things that break your heart?"

Prayer and tears must be united together with work. This is not prayer without work as if God will do it all, nor is it work without prayer as if we are sufficient in and of ourselves to accomplish what we want.

In 1 Kings 18:30, Elijah repaired the Altar of the Lord that was in ruins. Elijah took 12 stones, one for each of the tribes of Israel. How is your prayer altar? Is it lying in ruins? Does it need repair and rebuilding? That had to take place before God's fire would fall. The situation in the time of Elijah was similar to our own day and age. The physical famine at this time was superseded by the Spiritual Famine in the Land, and the Lord wants His people to stand in the gap, to be mouthpieces for God as they declare His word with spirit animated power without fear or favour to all.

Preaching, as Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones said, "is logic on fire and theology coming through a man who is on fire for God." And how we

need the fire of revival today. This is counting the cost, which involves much prayer, humility, tears and hard work.

Nehemiah had the herculean task of removing all of those large stones that had tumbled into the valley before they could start fresh and rebuild. I well remember the fire we had in the early '60s in which our family business, Welland Lumber and Builders Supplies, virtually burned down. The fire damage, the water damage and the clearing of all the debris and charred remains was a monumental task to transpire before we could venture to rebuild.

Rebuilding also requires planning. Nehemiah journeyed to Palestine, he examined the walls, he was given timber to make beams for the gates. And he did receive opposition from Sanballat and Tobiah so much so that they worked for a time with a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other.

You can expect opposition from the devil whenever you do God's work. But we must fight and build. We fight the spiritual war with the Sword of the Spirit as we rebuild the crumbling foundations that are all around us. And through hard work and much perseverance that wall was completed in just the short

time of 52 days. And they celebrated on top of that wall with the music of symbols, harps and lyres. he wall was completed and dedicated to God.

Once again, Jeremiah 1 vs 10 carries on and completes his commission which is to "build and to plant." Where are the Jeremiah's today? Who are promised as He was that God would make of Him a fortified city an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land. (Jer. 1:18) Verse 19 speaks of opposition one again - "They will fight against you but not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you." As all Christians must: 1. rebuild their prayer altars; 2. rediscover God's word; 3. repentantly pray and confess their sins.

Crumbling foundations? Yes, undoubtedly there are cracks and fissures everywhere, coupled with the constant erosion of values. Deterioration of preaching in the pulpit? Unfortunately, yes - John Stott said, "May preachers expound the book, the whole book and nothing but the book so help them God." Every preacher should make that vow.

And even though our foundations are crumbling, we pray, fast and work here and at the same time we look to the city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God.

Shipwrecks – Wanderer

SKIP GILLHAM

For QMI Agency Niagara

The bulk carrier *Wanderer* was less than a year old when it first came to the Great Lakes.

The British flag freighter was built at Shimizu, Japan, in 1973 and was a Seaway trader before the end of the year. The 174.1-metre-long by 22.92-metre-wide, diesel-powered vessel could handle more than 27,000 tonnes of cargo at saltwater draft.

Wanderer was still coming into the Great Lakes a decade later and made two trips through the Welland Canal in 1983 with Sarnia the destination in July and Chicago in November.

ber.

The ship was sold and renamed *Sotiras* in 1987, *Solesa* in 1989, *Ocean Spirit* in 1993 and *Ocean Wave* in 1999. The latter did not last long.

On Oct. 8, 1999, the ship was approaching Mongia, India, with a cargo of 14,500 tonnes of bagged cement when it went aground not far from the local pilot station. Water began entering two of the holds and the hull cracked prompting the crew to abandon ship.

Before long the *Ocean Wave* broke in two. The after end remained aground but the bow section disappeared into deep water.



Wanderer, pictured in this undated photo.

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■ **CRIME:** Volunteer group fundraising to replace stolen property

POCOMAR victim of motor theft

MARYANNE FIRTH
Tribune Staff

It left Norm Dashwood with a sinking feeling.

When the operations officer with Port Colborne Marine Auxiliary Rescue (POCOMAR) was reading the unit's vessel for Saturday's Santa Claus parade in the lakeside city, he made a startling discovery.

Someone had stolen the motor from the inflatable boat crews use to perform shallow-water rescues.

The inflatable was connected to one of POCOMAR's larger vessels, which had been readied for winter storage in the Superior Harbour Marina parking lot.

The theft, under investigation by Niagara Regional Police, occurred sometime between Nov. 22 and Dec. 6.

After realizing the motor had been taken, Dashwood was hit with pangs of anger.

"Who steals from a rescue organization that's run by all volunteers?" he questioned with a voice filled with frustration.

POCOMAR's insurance premiums and deductible are "incredibly high," Dashwood said, which means the cost to replace the motor, at a cost of about \$4,000, falls on the unit's shoulders.

"Unfortunately, this means that we won't be able to use those funds for updated life-saving equipment and supplies. This could mean life or death for someone on the water next season."

The stolen motor is a 2007 15-horsepower Mercury outboard with a Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary sticker on

its right side and a Nicholls' Marine sticker on its rear left side.

Whoever stole the motor came prepared, Dashwood said.

The lock, electrical cables, tarp and ratchet straps were all cut.

Dashwood hoped to appeal to the person or persons who stole the motor.

"Just bring it back to the marina," he said.

"Maybe they'll stop and think, 'I just stole from someone who could save my life some day.'"

The auxiliary unit, which receives no government funding, has been the target of thefts in the past.

Most recently, in May, someone attempted to steal propellers from the



SUPPLIED PHOTO
Sometime between Nov. 22 and Dec. 6, the motor was stolen from the inflatable boat Port Colborne Marine Auxiliary Rescue uses for shallow-water rescues.

POCOMAR vessel.

The safety pins were removed from the propellers and, as a result, one was lost during a water exercise.

To prevent any further incidents, Dashwood is hoping someone in the community will step forward to offer

indoor storage for the group's equipment during the cold-weather months.

Along with having issues of theft, the group needs indoor storage for off-season maintenance, upgrades and repairs to vessels, he said.

POCOMAR has set up a

donation page and is asking for the community's support to replace the motor.

To make a donation, visit www.gofundme.com/News-Motor4POCOMAR.

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■ **MUSIC:** Ryan Swayze in the spirit of giving with his Christmas Time recordings

Online album sales directed to Hope Centre

GREG FURNINGER
QMI Agency Niagara

Welland musician Ryan Swayze is in the spirit of giving this season — he's donating all the proceeds of his online holiday album sales to the Hope Centre.

Specifically, the funding is to help the agency settle into its new King St. building, and support its Hope House emergency shelter.

They've helped so many people — including my family when I was younger and needed help."

Christmas Time is a 12-song compilation of public domain yuletide favourites, including *White Christmas*, *Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer*, *Do You Hear What I Hear* and *Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree*.

Recorded at home in 2013 and released to a wide audience at the beginning of November, it can be previewed on the iTunes Store or be heard in its entirety at BandCamp (<https://ryanswayze.bandcamp.com>).

Said one iTunes reviewer: "Gave this album a listen on the advice of a friend of mine, and I have to say, that I thoroughly enjoy this album and will be playing it with the family over the holidays."

The whole album can be downloaded from iTunes for \$9.99. Individual songs are 99¢. It is also available at Amazon (\$8.99) and BandCamp (\$7).

Swayze figures he earns about 60 cents for each song sold through iTunes.

He's not sure how much money his effort will funnel to Hope Centre, but

LISTEN TO THE MUSIC

Preview: <https://itunes.apple.com/ca/album/christmas-time/id937346895>

Full songs: <https://ryanswayze.bandcamp.com>

More on the Net: <http://ryanswayze1.wix.com/christmastime>

last month it cracked the No. 19 spot on iTunes new holiday releases.

"I would assume that's a good indicator at this time, he says, adding he expects a quarterly financial statement at the end of the month.

For Swayze, his philanthropic act and his love of music are both simply about sharing.

"I've never really been a musician to make music," says the 25-year-old who has released three other full-length albums.

In his website posting to listeners, Swayze writes of his first holiday album: "... growing up I'd always celebrate the holidays by singing Christmas carols, I always felt it brought happiness and cheer to all who heard the music. This year I wanted to release my holiday album to honour the meaning of Christmas."

"The work they do at The Hope Centre helps those in need within my local community. They've helped family and friends of mine in their time of need and I know they would put this to good use. ... Let's share the gift of music while giving back."

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**IN
BRIEF**

**Niagara's
Deadmau5 earns
sixth Grammy nod**

Will the sixth time be the charm for Niagara's Joel Zimmerman at the

Grammy Awards?

The massively popular electronic music producer known as Deadmau5 nabbed his sixth nomination Friday, a best dance/electronic album nod for his double-disc *While (1<2)*, released in June. Despite winning several Juno, Beatport and International Dance Music awards, Zimmerman has been shut out at the Grammys. He was previously nominated in 2009, 2012 (when he collected three nods), and 2013.

For the 57th Grammy Awards, being held Feb. 8 in Los Angeles, Zimmerman is up against Aphex Twin's *Syco*, Little Dragon's *Nabuma Rubberband*, Röyksopp & Robyn's *Do It Again*, and Mat Zo's *Damage Control*.

■ SOCIAL SERVICES

Province software issue expected to cost \$75,000 in Niagara Region OT

ROB HOULE

QMI Agency Niagara

Niagara Region expects to incur upwards of \$75,000 in overtime because of a "glitch" with a new provincial government software program.

Chief administrative officer Harry Schlange said last Thursday staff in the

social services department put in \$50,000 in overtime last week and are expected to put in another \$25,000 in overtime moving forward to make sure people on Ontario Works receive their cheques on time — and in the proper amount.

A provincial government described "glitch" with its new \$240-million Social

Assistance Management System (SAMS), which was installed by the Ministry of Community and Social Services on Nov. 12, has resulted in millions of dollars in overpayments and payments going to incorrect addresses.

"We've experienced challenges with the new software program," Sarah Pen-

nisli, the Region's director of social services and employment opportunities, said. "The challenges range from technical problems with the system. We've noticed there's some inaccuracies with the data, and all this is making it difficult for us to serve our clients."

Because of the software problem, Pennisi said 50%

of the region's social services staff put in overtime last week manually checking payments to ensure accuracy.

Since the province and region share equally in the cost of administering Ontario Works locally, the unexpected overtime is an estimated \$37,500 hit to the region's bottom line.

Schlange said because the overtime is a direct result of the province, the region will ask for full reimbursement. He said staff will draft a motion for council to endorse at its meeting Dec. 18 asking the province to cover the full cost of overtime associated with the SAMS software.

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■ **SOCIETY:** Helping women abused by those in authority

New initiatives to help sex assault victims

ALISON LANGLEY
QMI Agency Niagara

It is estimated that one in three Canadian women will experience sexual assault in her adult life.

Fewer than 10% of sexual assaults are reported to police.

"A lot of people don't understand why women don't come forward and report what's happening to them," said Suzanne Mason, public education co-ordinator for Niagara Region Sexual Assault Centre.

"With recent events, people are talking about it more and more and I think they realize that these women are often victimized by people in positions of authority."

You can imagine how difficult it would be to say something. Many think they won't be believed or that no one will care."

And while the public is now more at ease discussing topics such as domestic violence, mental health issues or drunk driving, there's still an uncomfortable silence that surrounds the issue of sexual assault.

Mason said recent events — including the arrest of CBC personality Jian Ghomeshi on sexual assault charges, the accusations against entertainer Bill Cosby and sexual misconduct allegations involving several MPPs — should help to remove some of the stigma

that surrounds the issue of sexual abuse.

"I'm hoping people will get more comfortable with the topic of sexual assault, sexual abuse and harassment because that will translate into more support for us so we can help more victims."

Last week, the Ontario government announced it plans to take action against sexual violence by introducing a number of initiatives including having Liberal MPPs undergo sexual assault and harassment training.

Other initiatives, to begin early next year, include a multimedia public education campaign, the creation of a standing Roundtable

on Violence Against Women and work across several ministries to improve support for victims of sexual violence.

"Sexual violence and harassment is a reality in every community in this province. In every workplace, every campus, every context, we can and must do better," said Premier Kathleen Wynne.

Niagara Region Sexual Assault Centre applauds any steps the government plans to take to tackle the issue and hopes the support will include additional funding for agencies that offer services to victims of sexual assault.

*Any initiative around preventing sexual violence and supporting

GETTING HELP

Niagara Region Sexual Assault
Centre
24 HR Crisis Line: 905-682-4584
www.sexualassaultniagara.org

victims is good," Mason said.

"Hopefully, it will mean more support for agencies like ours because we are the front line workers."

The centre receives about two-thirds of its operating budget through the Ministry of the Attorney General.

"We have to fundraise between \$250,000 and \$300,000 a year," Mason said. "It's a challenge."

The provincial announcement came two days before the 25th anniversary of

"A quarter of a century later, violence remains prevalent in the lives of far

too many women and girls," said Tracy MacCharles, the minister responsible for women's issues.

The premier has also instructed ministers to explore ways to improve support for victims of sexual violence and harassment relating to the criminal justice system, policing, health care, education, post-secondary campuses and Ontario workplaces.

She said an "action plan" to address the issues will be developed by March 8 — International Women's Day.

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IN BRIEF

Port man charged with voyeurism

A Port Colborne man is facing additional charges as part of an ongoing police investigation.

The man had been charged earlier this year with possession of child pornography and making child pornography available, on March 5.

Detectives from the Niagara Regional Police Internet child exploitation unit continued their investigation and filed further charges against the same man last Friday.

Jeffery Desgagne, 38, of is charged with one count of voyeurism and one count of break and enter to a dwelling house. Police said no more information will be released to protect the identity of the alleged victims.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ **GOOGLE:** St. Catharines native gets unique view of country

Canadian passions a search button away

KARENA WALTER
QMI Agency Niagara

Aaron Brindle calls it real-time anthropology.

A look at what Canadianians are searching for on Google says a lot about what our nation is passionate about and curious about.

"It can be trivial, it can be celebrity obsessions, but it can also be amazing moments where the country comes together," says Brindle, Google Canada's search trends expert and a St. Catharines native. "It can be profound, it can be sad, it can be hilarious."

Brindle, 39, was a curious child who wanted to explore and now he's a curious adult who gets to do just that in his role as the company's communications and public affairs manager.

From mapping northern Canada with Google's Street View team to analyzing national search trends, Brindle gets a unique insight into

the country's psyche.

He gets to tell stories about the country, tapping into its history background and love of narrative.

"All those curiosities and passions I had as a kid, I feel lucky enough to work at a company that sees those quirks as assets," he says.

Brindle grew up in St. Catharines with his two sisters, Mary and Iona, and parents Jill, a school teacher now working at Brock University, and Ian, a Brock chemistry professor. He went to Maple Grove School in Vineland and Oakridge School in St. Catharines before attending Ridley College.

Brindle thought he'd grow up to be a professor like his father and pursued a love for Canadian history at McGill University. He ended up at a software company in Vancouver but ultimately became a journalist at CBC for 11 years. The Current before joining

Google 3 1/2 years ago.

"What I loved most about studying history was its narrative. You could extract these amazing stories that defined the nation that we live in and that's always stuck with me," he says. "It stuck with me at CBC as a journalist and it's really defined the role I play at Google as well."

His passion project at Google has been mapping Canada's north.

While the company was doing a great job of mapping urban centres, Brindle says the north had been neglected. Within a year at Google he was in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, as part of a team mapping the community.

Google Maps has a billion unique users every month. Meanwhile, more than one trillion Google searches are performed globally each year.

Google's list of top search trends for 2014 will be released later this month featuring everything from top

pop-culture searches to most searched news and political issues.

"I kind of look at Google trends as real-time anthropology. An opportunity to reflect for a moment on the world we live in as seen through the prism of that Google search box," says Brindle.

Brindle says search results show how the country is tapped into a global community. This year, the World Cup and Sochi Winter Olympics were events that Canadians cared deeply about on a global stage, he says.

There's also something quintessentially Canadian about some of the results.

Brindle likes to pull fun correlations out of the data that might somehow reflect Canada's culture or geography.

Take the Grey Cup last Sunday between the Calgary Stampers and Hamilton Tiger-Cats. In anticipation of



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Aaron Brindle wearing The Trekker — a backpack with a camera system on top — in Iqaluit on March 27, 2013. The Trekker enables him to take images for Google Street View in locations only accessible by foot.

the game, Google searches for chili recipes were surging in Alberta, while searches for meatloaf recipes were booming in Ontario.

"From that interesting co-relation you could see that Tiger-Cat fans might be sitting down to meatloaf

whereas Stamps fans might be tucking into some chili," says Brindle, his anthropology hat on.

"In some ways it's trivial but at the same time, trivial or not, this is our country."

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LOCAL NEWS

■ **HEALTH CARE:** NHS and St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton joins forces for improved care, Smith says

Regional program implemented for chronic kidney disease

GREG FURMINGER
QMI Agency Niagara

A regional program for chronic kidney disease care has been established by Niagara Health System and St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton — the first such partnership between the two since Kevin Smith became CEO for both health systems.

And patients seen by both health systems can

expect more partnering, he said last week.

The renal program partnership, announced mid-November, was described by Smith as the "first major clinical achievement" between the two health systems since he assumed the role of NHS chief executive officer in January.

He was already president and CEO of St. Joseph's Health System.

In a phone interview,

Smith said the two health systems are also looking at a similar partnership to provide mental health services. He said he's open to partnerships with other hospital networks, too, if there's a benefit to patients.

"It's not that different to what we're doing for cancer care, not unlike the Walker Cancer Centre and what we're doing with the Juravinski centre," he said.

Partnering on the renal program — the largest such program in Ontario — is done to ensure the best patient experience across the kidney care spectrum, from early detection of kidney disease to dialysis or transplant.

The program serves patients from across the Hamilton-Niagara-Haldimand-Brant Local Health Integration Network.

"A regional program for kidney care is a truly innovative approach to addressing what is most important to patients in a high-functioning health system: coordination, satisfaction, quality and sustainability," Smith said.

While there might be opportunities to save money through standardiza-



NHS ONTARIO/ST. JOSEPH'S HEALTHCARE

Pictured is some of the equipment for the Niagara Falls Kidney Care Centre that opened in March 2013. Niagara Health System and St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton have now announced they have established a regional program for chronic kidney disease care.

zation of practices for NHS and St. Joseph's, including through purchasing, "the real purpose is improving the quality of care," he said.

By streamlining coordination, it's expected transitions between phases of care will be made smoother for renal patients.

"The potential for a seamless experience for, say, a dialysis patient who lives in Port Erie and requires a transplant later

in their journey is a really compelling goal of this program," said LHIN chief executive officer Donna Cripps in a news release.

"We will continue to encourage these partners and watch for exciting developments of this collaboration."

Said NHS board chair Dr. Barry Wright: "This is a great opportunity we simply could not miss out on, and one that we are very excited to be actively engaged in with our healthcare partners."

Smith said staff at both health systems will compare how each have provided renal care to better program results.

Rick Badzioch, clinical director of the nephrology program at St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton and the LHIN's regional director for the Ontario Renal Network, has been named executive director for the newly integrated program.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ **CANINES:** Former figure skater now competing with her cocker spaniels

The life of a title-winning show dog

DAN DAKIN
QMI Agency Niagara

This can't be a coincidence. Lizzie the dog must know what's going on. She's posing.

As the flash goes off frame after frame, the six-year-old American cocker spaniel seems to turn her head and look at the camera like a politician giving a phoney smile whenever a camera lens is pointed.

As cocker spaniels go, Lizzie is flawless. She looks like she's been freshly bathed and her hair is perfectly combed. Well, almost perfect.

"Sorry, I just need it," Lizzie's owner Virginia Davies says as she pulls out a dog brush and lightly combs the animal's hair between poses.

When you've been campaigning in dog shows for two and a half decades, you know what it takes to make a dog look good.

And, after all, Lizzie has a reputation to uphold.

She's currently the No. 2-ranked American cocker spaniel in Canada for the rally obedience discipline after a 2014 season that included shows in Kitchener, Toronto, Hamilton and Lindsay. She has too many awards and ribbons to count.

One doesn't become the second-ranked dog in Canada without hard work.

There are group and private lessons, daily training at home, grooming sessions and occasional visits with Aron Bhan, a veterinary chiropractor at Main West Animal Hospital in Welland.

"We're just making sure she's functioning the best that she can," Bhan said. "Making sure she's got no glitches that will impede her during the shows."

Lizzie's full name is Nesmar's Elzizeth Beth's Sam — The Nesmar referring to the breeder's kennel she came from; Elzizeth a tribute to Davies' mother Elizabeth who died in 2008; and Sam being the name of her mother's beloved dog. There are also eight sets of letters that follow Lizzie's full name, all referring to titles she has captured in her career.

She started training at six months old and has been competing for more than four years.

"Right now it's more the maintenance of skills because she's competing at such a high level," Davies said.

Davies' mother took great pride in her daughter's achievements, first as a com-

petitive figure skater for more than 30 years, and later as a dog handler.

"She loved it. She came to the shows and was very proud," she said.

Like many dog owners and trainers who take part in trialling and obedience shows, Davies treats her past time more like a second career.

The Welland woman works in health care for Niagara Region, but 'campaigning' as the activity is known, plays a huge role in her life.

Davies treats her two cocker spaniels like her kids. She had three, but Simon died.

Just saying that sentence makes her eyes fill to the point where flowing tears are a word or two away.

"It's too hard," Davies said. "I don't want to talk about that."

Simon was Davies' fourth cocker spaniel, and the third she competed with. Her first was Julie, a family pet she got in 1980 after picking the breed because she liked how one looked in a calendar.

"I thought 'that's a cute dog,'" Davies said. After Julie came Brandy. Then Samantha, Simon, Abbey and Lizzie.

Up until the early 2000s, Davies was competing in both



DAN DAKIN/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Welland Main Animal Hospital veterinarian Aron Bhan works on Lizzie, a six-year-old American cocker spaniel owned by Virginia Davies, right.

figure skating and dog trialling.

"I draw from a lot of strengths from figure skating," Davies said. "The commitment, the determination, coping with disappointment."

She said the feeling of winning in a hallway to compete with her dogs is the same feeling she had waiting in the hallway of an arena to skate.

"It's that same adrenaline flow and concentration," she said.

While Lizzie is the current

star, Abbey is also still competing.

She's nine years old, however, and likely only has one season left in her.

"She is now virtually deaf and it's totally different being in the ring with a deaf dog," Davies said. "There are more hand signals and it's more work to keep her focused."

Davies knows the dogs likely don't understand traditional pressure to perform, but said they seem to love competing.

"They're just having a good time," she said. "They don't know they're going for a title, but they do know what they're doing in the ring and that they're performing because they've done it so many times."

Both dogs will be back competing in 2015, and they'll be joined in Davies' home by a third cocker spaniel this spring.

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■ ST. CATHARINES

Future consolidation could imperil local GM operations

DON FRASER

QMI Agency Niagara

The fate of St. Catharines' General Motors operations is at a "higher risk," says a prominent consultant.

Joe McCabe, president of auto industry consulting firm Auto-Forecast Solutions, is raising concerns in general about GM's future in Ontario.

McCabe said local production of engines and transmissions could be consolidated elsewhere, due to excess production capacity.

The V-6 and high-feature V-6 engines will continue to be in demand, he said.

However, the same engines are built elsewhere by GM, including Tonawanda, NY, Flint, Mich. and Mexico.

"We look at the volumes and just can't find enough vehicles to consume three or four plants worth of engines (and transmissions)," McCabe said.

"The engines and transmis-

sions slated for St. Catharines ... can be done by other Powertrain facilities. So a consolidation is probably going to have to happen soon — we just don't know where it's going to happen."

The result is, he said, is that local operations are at a "higher risk level."

Of particular concern is a domestic production agreement that expires in 2016.

In return for a multibillion-dollar bailout by the province and federal government made during the auto industry collapse, the automotive giant agreed in 2009 to keep 16% of its contracted production in Canada through to 2016.

Meanwhile, Canada's share of vehicle production has been declining, with auto investment continuing to ramp up in Mexico.

Oshawa's GM production is especially vulnerable, McCabe said, with a full closure possible by 2019.

As GM vehicles and parts in Canada can be built elsewhere and products can move easily across borders in free trade agreements, it puts investment in Canada at risk — particularly when stacked against lower-cost areas that produce the same amount of vehicles.

The proportion of GM vehicles built in Canada that are bought domestically is also low, McCabe said, and larger auto manufacturers have a natural inclination to produce where they sell.

He adds the Canadian plants always had a "value-added" boost, including "high quality, high-skilled labour."

"That factor has, and will always continue to be, a benef-

fit to the Canadian automotive landscape," he said.

"But business is business. And if something can be built at a similar quality and be done at cheaper cost, then the numbers outweigh that benefit."

Top of concern is Oshawa. The Cami facility in Ingersoll is No. 2, with St. Catharines' operations the third most at risk, he said.

"There's been no actual decisions made by General Motors," said Wayne Gates, the NDP MPP for Niagara Falls and a former leader of Unifor Local 159 representing approximately 1,500 GM workers.

He said he thinks fears of the Oshawa plant closing, and Cami going to one shift, is unfounded.

He adds it's clear Canadian

operations are competitive with those of the U.S. for many reasons, including a lower-value dollar and cheaper medical benefit costs.

"That said, I have a lot of worries about GM and new product allocations ... including St. Catharines," Gates said. "It is essential that governments play an active role in ... an integrated national auto strategy."

He also said governments need to negotiate an extension to the 2016 domestic manufacturing commitment.

"It's really kept us going," he said. "We have to be proactive and can no longer sit back where we see what happens (in the plant closure) in Windsor. It makes no sense we're sit-

ting back knowing our Canadian operations could be in jeopardy."

Tim McKinnon, Unifor Local 159 plant chair for St. Catharines, spoke of the continuing top quality reputation all the GM plants have in Ontario.

"We've always done the right thing, we've always come to the plate," said McKinnon, who is also union vice-chair of the master committee for GM's plants in Canada. "I believe as a whole, GM Canada — at least as far as Unifor goes — will continue to do the right thing to ensure it is manufacturing in Canada."

"Is there a concern? Yes," McKinnon said, "but I really believe ... all three plants are viable."

A NEW MAYOR WEIGHS IN

St. Catharines Mayor Walter Sendzik said he's aware of the consultant's concerns about the future of GM's operations in Canada, but he thinks other factors could be in play.

One, is a new GM Canada president in Stephen Carlisle, with whom Sendzik has requested a meeting about the company's future plans.

"It just be reiterating that St. Catharines is one of the most efficient, productive plants in the GM North American complement of factories," said the new mayor.

Sendzik said other points of emphasis are the plant's advanced technology and its high rating in environmental

sustainability — "in all the checkpoints ... it ranks near the top."

"That bodes well for St. Catharines," he said. "But there is always concerns with companies like GM, that are a global company."

He said it is important to prove to GM its operations are competitive and there's a local willingness to work with government counterparts.

He said GM must continue to support a mutually beneficial local partnership with a knowledgeable and skilled workforce.

"I think we continue to demonstrate that," he said.

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■ **STUDY:** Saint Paul High School and Niagara Casinos

Contraband cigarette smoking is on the rise

TONY RICCIUTO
QMI Agency Niagara

They go around collecting discarded cigarette butts

from different locations across Ontario and in Niagara they found the use of contraband cigarettes is on the increase in places like Saint Paul High

School and Casino Niagara. A recent study done on behalf of the Ontario Convenience Store Association has found the use of illegal

tobacco products is on the rise across the province.

"This is an issue that can no longer be ignored," said Dave Bryans, chief executive officer of the association.

"We have to start being a little serious about this and stop going around in circles."

Samples were collected at 130 sites across Ontario from Sept. 20 to Nov. 10. The same study was conducted last year. Specific sites were selected that included hospitals, office buildings, high schools and other public locations.

The results were based on a count of legal cigarettes compared to a count of contraband cigarettes.

"Contraband doesn't have a reporting system. Those selling it don't tell you and those buying it won't admit it," said Bryans, which is why this is called an unscientific butt sweep.

"We basically send a crew out and sweep up the butts. Where more people congregate we get a better reading of what is really going on in Ontario."

The association did another one five years ago when there was a tax increase on cigarettes because they wanted to find out how it might affect the industry.

This year, some 19,734 butts were tested and on average across the province 22.5% were found to be contraband.

Toronto actually saw a decrease in the prevalence of contraband tobacco when compared to the 2013 study, while Southern Ontario and Northern Ontario are slightly higher than the provincial average at 25%.

The study found a considerable increase in the use of contraband cigarettes at Saint Paul High School

in Niagara Falls. In 2013, it was 8.6% while in 2014 that number jumped to 25.3%.

"High schools should be a huge concern to local health authorities and citizens because the trend line basically says that contraband is actually infiltrating our high schools and everybody is ignoring it," said Bryans. "Anyone under the age of 19 should not even be smoking."

There was also a noticeable difference at Greater Niagara General Hospital where it jumped to 21.5% in 2014 from 14.5% in 2013.

At Casino Niagara, the use of contraband cigarettes rose to 34% last year from 32%, while at Niagara Fallsview Casino Resort the number dropped to 36.6% from 40.8%.

"Contraband has a flow problem. Some days it flows into your community and other days the RCMP stop it," said Bryans. "Convenience stores basically sell about 98 to 100% of all the legal taxed cigarettes in the province. We are actually the government's biggest partner in collecting the taxes."

We don't see them fixing the problem when it comes to contraband. Now they have banned menthol so we can guess what the numbers will be a year from now. Menthol smokers will end up buying them from the trunks of cars, having them delivered to them or they will be going to the reserves."

The Sudbury region took the top spot for illegal cigarettes during 2014, coming in at 35.3%. Two of their locations, their hospital and their race-track, came in at 45%.

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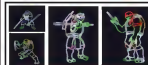
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Pharmacists SMOKING CESSATION

Smoking is the most **PREVENTABLE** cause of disease and death. In Canada, 45,000 people die annually, and as many as half of all smokers will die due to tobacco use. Smoking is known to cause various types of cancer, COPD, heart disease, stroke and many other conditions such as influenza, peptic ulcers, osteoporosis, thyroid disease and cataracts.

There are 2 primary options to smoking cessation; Cold Turkey or Medication. There have been many success stories of patients able to quit cold turkey, however it is much more difficult and shown to have an increased rate of relapse. It may be the most cost effective option, but these people suffer greatly from nicotine withdrawal symptoms, which include irritability, anger, restlessness, impatience, difficulty concentrating, depression and anxiety.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) is available over-the-counter in 4 forms; gum, patch, inhaler, and lozenge. There are different dosages available which is dependent on the amount of cigarettes the individual smokes. If you have questions regarding which dose you should start on and the proper technique to use the NRT, please speak to your pharmacist for assistance.

NRT provides nicotine in a safe form so the body does not have to endure nicotine withdrawal while a person adapts to not smoking. As opposed to cigarettes, NRT are medications that contain only nicotine and not the other harmful chemicals that are present in cigarettes. NRT is considered a 'step down' approach where the patient is exposed to a gradual decrease in the amount of nicotine in the blood. This enables the body to adjust to the changes in a slow and steady manner and experience less side effects.

The most commonly prescribed medication available for smoking cessation is Champix (Varenicline). Champix has recently been shown to have great success for smoking cessation. It works by binding to the same receptors as nicotine, which results in decreased cravings and withdrawal symptoms. Additionally, it decreases the pleasure that people get from smoking making the quitting process that much more effective.

Although there are medications and therapeutic options available, the single most important smoking cessation aid is a patients' will and determination to quit.

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■ **REPORT:** Region among Ontario's 10 worst

Niagara's poor rate housing as unacceptable

CHEERY CLOCK
QMI Agency/Niagara

Niagara ranks in the Top 10 of Ontario communities offering inadequate housing for the poor.

Inadequate because the poor say they can't afford the costs of shelter, their housing is in need of major repairs, or because they're living in units they feel are too crowded.

That's according to the 2014 Canadian Housing Observer, a report prepared by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. It is based on 2011 data collected through a Statistics Canada questionnaire.

CMHC identified nearly 18,000 households in Niagara that fit the "core housing need" category, meaning their housing is "unacceptable," says Ian Melzer, manager of the housing needs group, in CMHC's housing research division.

Simply, those families felt their housing was unacceptable for at least one of the three reasons.

Those families represent 11.6% of all households in Niagara, and are mostly renters but also include some homeowners.

Most of those families — 10.9% — say they can't afford their housing because the cost of shelter is more than 30% of their income.

On average, those households are spending half their income on shelter, including utilities, and for owners, mortgage payments and property taxes.

The average before-tax income of the core housing need families that were surveyed is about \$20,500.

In Ontario, the communities with a bigger percentage of people on low income unhappy with their housing include: Toronto, Barrie, Brantford, Peterborough, London and Kingston.

In Niagara, there are nearly 5,900 households — or about 10,600 people — on a wait list for affordable housing, says Mira Pearlsdale, acting general manager of Niagara Regional Housing.

Wait times can be up to 10 years, especially for single people needing a one-bedroom apartment.

"Do we have enough affordable housing? No," says Katherine Chislett, commissioner of community services for Niagara.

Even though rental prices in Niagara are among the lowest in the province, they're still unaffordable to people trying to survive on low income.

A single person on Ontario Works receives about \$7,500 annually. Affordable rent — at 30% of income — would be about \$190 per month.

"What could you possibly afford to rent for that?" says Chislett.

Indeed, adequate housing is important for reasons beyond just having a place to call home.

"We know you need a home to do well in life," says Chislett.

"How can you hold a job, how can you go to school, how can you be healthy without having a home?"

And how are people making ends meet while they wait for affordable housing?

"They forego food or something else in their life," she says. "The longer the wait, the more strain

they're under."

Over at Community Care of St. Catharines and Thorold, Catherine Livingston, program manager of Housing Help, hears those stories.

Stories of people in wheelchairs who have been approved for priority status, still waiting for housing. People with multiple children being turned down by landlords. People on assistance, or working multiple minimum wage jobs forking out 70 to 90% of their earnings on a basic apartment.

Renters faced with high electricity bills because their windows are

drafty. Renters living in units with mold, broken windows and other repair issues. And clients unable to ask for help because they want to preserve some pride and dignity.

"It's unbelievable that this is happening," she says.

"It's not acceptable. When you're living day to day in crisis, you're not able to navigate or fight the system," she says.

Society is too complacent, she says.

"We sit and say, 'that's the way it is.' And nothing changes. It just gets worse."

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AMONG THE HIGHLIGHTS ...

Number of Niagara households: 154,000

Number of Niagara households in core housing need: 19,200

Percentage of Niagara households in need: 11.6%

Percentage of Ontario households in need: 13.4%

Percentage of Canadian households in need: 12.5%

Reasons Niagara households are in core housing need:

Below affordability: 9.2%

Below suitability (crowded): 0.3%

Below adequacy (major repairs needed): 0.3%

Below for multiple reasons: 1.8%

Source: 2014 Canadian Housing

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European model shown. Features and equipment may vary in Canada. Total selling price for a new 2015 BMW X1 xDRIVE28i All-Wheel Drive is \$34,600, which includes MSRP (\$35,900), freight and PDI (to \$2,095), dealer administration fee (\$295), AC, levy (\$120), OAC (\$5), and the leasing fee (\$22.38). Rentals are first to see individual price and charge administration fees, which may change the APR or the price of the vehicle. **Lease offer based on a new 2015 BMW X1 xDRIVE28i All-Wheel Drive available only through BMW Financial Services Canada on approved credit (CAC). Lease example based on selling price less one month payment credit (Credit equal to one monthly payment will be deducted from the purchase price of the vehicle. Actual monthly payment is calculated based on purchase price after payment credit is applied. Maximum payment credit: \$500) of new 2015 BMW X1 xDRIVE28i All-Wheel Drive base model (\$35,900) less 1.9% APR for 48 months. Monthly payment is \$498 with 30 down payment or trade equivalent. Freight and PDI (to \$2,095), dealer administration fee (\$295), AC, levy (\$120), OAC (\$5), the ownership fee (\$22.38), PPSA (\$5.43), licensing, registration, and applicable taxes are due on signing. *First month's lease payment and security deposit of one month's payment are due at lease inception. The residual value of the vehicle at the end of the term is \$17,385. Annual kilometre limit is 80,000. 80,151+ miles over 48 months. Offer expires January 4, 2015. Delivery must be taken by January 4, 2015. Offer requires Retailer participation. Offer is subject to availability and may be cancelled or changed without notice. Certain conditions apply. See Performance BMW or BMW.ca for full details. *New 2015 BMW vehicles purchased from an authorized BMW Retailer in Canada are covered by a No-Charge Scheduled Maintenance plan for four years or 80,000 km, whichever comes first. Certain limitations apply. Contact Performance BMW for details. ©2014 BMW Canada Inc. "BMW", the BMW logo, BMW model designations and all other BMW related marks, images and symbols are the exclusive properties and/or trademarks of BMW AG, used under license.

LOCAL NEWS

■ PAN AM GAMES

Taking command of Pan Am Games security

ALISON LANGLEY
QMI Agency Niagara

Steve McIntyre is relishing the relative calm of his life. He's well aware that in only a few months from now he'll be busier than he's ever been. "Come next year, particularly in July, I'll be going 24 hours a day, seven days a week," he said.

The Niagara Falls resident recently joined Contemporary Security Canada and will be overseeing all aspects of security communications for the 2015 Pan Am Games in Toronto.

McIntyre is responsible

PAN AM GAMES

The 2015 Pan Am Games will be held from July 10 to 26 in Toronto, with events being held in 17 other communities including Welland and St. Catharines.

Approximately 6,000 athletes from 41 nations are expected to participate in 36 sports.

For more information, visit www.toronto2015.org.

for the multi-venue sporting event's C3 — a military term meaning command, control

and communications — operations.

"Essentially, I'll be developing, designing and directing all the communications for security at the Pan Am Games," he said.

"I'll be ultimately responsible for about 7,000 people." McIntyre had spent the last four years at the Scotiabank Convention Centre as director of security.

The decision to leave his post, he said, was a tough one.

"I worked with amazing people at Scotiabank," the 43-year-old said.

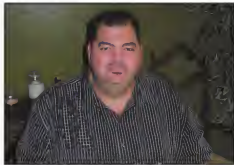
"But this is on a global scale.

How many people can put something like this on their resume. It's a great opportunity to work with people from all around the world."

When not busy preparing for the upcoming games, the Stamford Collegiate graduate is also a volunteer firefighter in Chippawa.

"A long time ago when I was a teenager, my mother was quite sick and the volunteer fire department came and took care of her and I took that as my cue to become involved," he said.

alison.langley@sunmedia.ca
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ALISON LANGLEY/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Steve McIntyre will be overseeing all aspects of security communications for the 2015 Pan Am Games in Toronto.

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LOCAL NEWS

ONE FOUNDATION
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Celebration of Lights

MARYANNE FIRTH
QMI Agency Niagara

There's something carry about a new manufacturing business that has set up shop in Welland.

With preserving the environment and serving small businesses in mind, Trivium Industries is determined to lead the way in the innovative bioplastics market.

At its Prince Charles Dr. plant, the company produces 100% organic, compostable and biodegradable bottles and containers made from plants and corn.

"Our niche is that everything we do is eco-friendly," Trivium president David D'Angelo said while touring the Welland facility.

"We're a small company that's just getting established," he said, adding if the projected growth is any indication, the business won't stay small for long.

"We're one of the first companies in North America that makes compostable bottles," he said, adding demand is high. D'Angelo, a recent Brock University graduate, began exploring the business ideas while taking entrepreneurial classes.

"There was no one really doing it," he said, adding most bioplastics are being produced only in China. "There was a gap in the market that we knew Trivium could fill."

The bottles are marketed mainly toward cosmetics companies selling items such as shampoos, lotions and soaps, as well as beverage companies, D'Angelo said.

"We are a custom manufacturer, for all the high-end market."

Much research, funded by the Ontario Centre of Excellence, and time was put into ensuring the product was as close to perfect as possible before getting the business off the ground, he said.

The key to the product's success is a special spray that was designed in partnership with Brock's chemistry department.

It is sprayed inside the bottles to ensure that despite the container's biodegradable nature, the shelf life of the product con-

tained within is not impacted.

"It helps the bottles to perform the way they should," D'Angelo said, adding it took about a year of testing to get the formula down to pat.

Once the bottles are disposed of, it takes about 150 days for them to be completely composted.

As more and more green products saturate the retail market, more green packaging is needed, said Trivium chief administrative officer Jim D'Angelo, David's father.

As a custom manufacturer, Trivium is able to not only offer eco-friendly products, but able to also provide them in smaller quantities. Providing orders of 50,000 to 150,000 units, mainly for smaller companies, is a niche in the market few others are able to fill, he added.

That likely means expansion is on the horizon, the younger D'Angelo said.

Manufacturing at the plant has only been underway for about a month. Though personnel is currently limited to only three people, he said, there are plans to fill a handful of positions immediately with more to come in the near future.

"As each new (manufacturing) line is added, we'll be looking to hire," said Bob Birrell, vice-president of operations.

Trivium will work with Job Gym to fill the roles.

It's good news the company is pleased to be bringing to Welland, D'Angelo said.

Company staff scoured the region for some time looking for the right location for the plant, he said, and the Rose City was ultimately chosen because of its complementary business sector, solid workforce and proximity to road, water and rail transport.

The 439 Prince Charles Dr. S. location, with nearly a hectare of property behind the existing building, also offers plenty of room to expand, Birrell said. D'Angelo also credited the City of Welland for the support it offered the company over the past two years as work was done to get Trivium off the ground.

For more information, visit www.triviumindustries.com.

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■ CHARITY

Niagara Children's Centre cuts ties with foundation

KARENA WALTER
(QMI Agency Niagara)

A centre that serves more than 3,500 Niagara children and youths with disabilities is cutting ties with

its foundation after 20 years and will raise donations from within. Niagara Children's Centre, for-

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INPORT NEWS ■ THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2014

merly Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre, announced a new fundraising structure in an online letter to its supporters.

"The change, which 'shocked' the foundation, will see the non-profit charitable rehabilitation centre, located on Glenridge Ave. in St. Catharines, establish an internal development department to handle fundraising activities.

"We think that we can cut down the cost of fundraising by having it in-house," said Don Fretz, chair of the centre's governance board, citing a current duplication of resources.

Niagara Children's Centre Foundation was incorporated in September 1994 specifically to raise funds for the centre. While located in the centre's building, it is a separate entity with its own board.

Fretz said the foundation has an executive director and two other staff members who are paid out of fundraising dollars. Its last financial statement listed salaries and benefits at \$181,000.

He said the centre's board hopes to do the same fundraising work from one position, supported by existing centre staff. It will start a search to fill a new position of director of development immediately.

"We feel having one organization with one voice in the community is more efficient. Two distinct organizations with the governance and management that goes with it is a duplication," Fretz said. "As we're looking forward, our plan is to speak with one voice in the community so we can control the message that goes out."

Currently, Fretz said the centre directors don't have control over fundraising strategies, though the centre relies on them heavily. He said it doesn't have the ability to set

targets or monitor results.

"We need to have control over our fundraising program and be able to have the ability to hold those responsible for the programs accountable. Our current structure of two independent organizations doesn't really support this," he said. "Hopefully in the end, more donor dollars will be directed to the mission services under this new structure."

The decision left the foundation and its board chairman Jack Foster "shocked".

"I really feel for the members of the board," said Foster, a founding member of the foundation who received a Diamond Jubilee medal last year for his volunteer efforts. "The foundation worked so hard in this community to build relationships. Most of the board members have been here 20 years and have been major contributors and hands on."

The foundation was involved in close to 40 special events each year, including Shakespeare in the Vineyard, Blues in the Vineyard and the Niagara Corvette Club's annual car show. Its net revenue at the end of 2013 was \$386,000 and at the end of 2012 was \$406,000.

"We had a lot of friends in the community, which we built up over time. The foundation has given the centre thousands of dollars," Foster said.

Foster said he believes it will be difficult for one person to do the role of the centre's three staff members, who he said worked diligently and put in a lot of overtime. "Somebody has to do the fundraising, somebody has to issue the receipts, somebody has to do the communications, so I think it would be very difficult for one person to do all those duties and responsibilities."

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BIZ BUZZ

New meal options for Niagara seniors

MARYANNE FIRTH
QMI Agency Niagara

Catalogues used to be a source to browse for that new outfit.

But thanks to a new Welland business, they're also the way seniors can select their next meal.

Copper County Foods specializes in frozen meal delivery for people aged 75 and older, those with special dietary requirements, as well as anyone faced with mobility issues that hinder their ability to cook.

The company has found a home at 14 Clark St., in the site of a former metal fabrication shop. It offers more than 100 items on its menu for residents across Niagara to choose from.

The meals are all balanced and nutritious, which helps to ensure recipients get appropriate nourishment, said owner and operator Katherine Hoeller, who runs the business alongside

parents Marianne and David Cheetham.

"We can accommodate anything they might be looking for," she said, whether dietary needs mean low sodium, low fat, high fibre or specialty dishes for diabetics or vegetarians.

Hoeller realized the importance of the service after her grandfather was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.

Her parents were his primary caregivers and while the task in general was difficult, cooking seemed to pose an additional challenge.

The family was introduced to a food delivery service offered in the U.K. and soon learned about its Canadian counterpart, the Copper County Foods franchise, which has three Ontario locations outside of Niagara. "We saw a market for it here because of the aging population," Hoeller said of an area that she believes draws many adults entering

retirement.

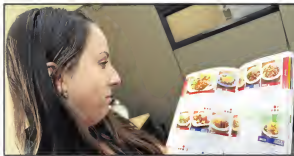
Welland was selected as the Niagara location because the city is centrally located and allows for quick deliveries to all municipalities, she said.

Deliveries are made to different cities each day of the week. Drivers, if instructed by the customer to do so, will enter the home and put the meals in the freezer.

All employees of Copper County undergo a criminal record and vulnerable sector check, Hoeller said. Only personable drivers are hired, she added, to ensure seniors feel comfortable welcoming them into their homes.

The service can provide peace of mind not only to seniors but also to their children, who often wonder whether their parents are eating balanced meals while living at home alone, Hoeller said.

"They can have a traditional pot roast dinner or a turkey dinner with all the trimmings any day of the



MARYANNE FIRTH: STAFF PHOTO
Copper County Foods owner and operator Katherine Hoeller looks over the company's meal catalogue at its Clark St. location in Welland.

week in a matter of minutes, but without the extra sodium traditionally found in store-bought pre-packaged meals," she said.

"We know many seniors have special dietary issues and have developed meals specifically with these requirements in mind."

The catalogue provides a picture of each meal, its nutritional content and details of which dietary requirements it's suitable for.

Minced and pureed meals are also available.

There's no contract, no minimum order and no delivery charge, Hoeller said.

"Some customers rely on this service completely and others only for one or two meals," said Marianne Cheetham.

The meals, she said, are "reasonably priced," ranging from \$5 to \$8.

Copper County is also a supplier for the Veterans

Access to Nutrition program, which provides government-subsidized meals to eligible veterans.

Customers can order food online or by phone.

For more information, visit www.coppercountyfoods.ca.

While the business is generally open year-round, it will be closed Dec. 5 to Dec. 12 while the family attends an out-of-town wedding.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ **NEW YEAR'S EVE SHOW:** Country singer headlines free concert



REUTERS

Keith Urban performs during the 48th Country Music Association Awards in Nashville, Tenn., in November. He will be the headline at the New Year's Eve concert in Niagara Falls.

■ **ENTERTAINMENT:** Frewin's Boomer back on stage

Tiger beats cancer

JOHN LAW
QMI Agency Niagara

Niagara's newest cancer survivor hopes to get back to his regular weight soon. About 225 kilograms or so.

Six and a half months ago, Niagara Falls magician Greg Frewin noticed his nine-year-old Siberian tiger Boomer acting a bit strange. Something on his right side was bugging him.

Closer inspection revealed a lesion that seemed to grow over the next week. Boomer, one of four tigers performing in his nightly magic show, was clearly agitated.

"We could tell he was licking it," says Frewin. "He was trying to keep it clean. Something was not right."

After a check with the vet, Boomer was sedated and the lesion cut open, which

revealed "signs of a tumour." A sample was analyzed and the bad news arrived shortly after — Boomer had cancer. The good news? It wasn't spreading.

Boomer was put back under and the tumour removed. Special stitches were required that he couldn't lick or chew them off.

"You can't put the cone of shame on a tiger."

For 14 days Frewin and his staff kept "a close eye" on his big cat, and noticed something surprising: Boomer had no interest in the problem area.

"I think he realized whatever it was that was uncomfortable (was gone)," he said.

After two weeks, the stitches were removed and Boomer had a full exami-

nation. The tests came back positive, but he'll be under close scrutiny from here on. "It only takes one or two little cells and they can start regrowing," says Frewin. "Doesn't mean they will, but we're going to have to really keep an eye on him moving forward."

Frewin noticed something else after Boomer's successful surgery: He was much more playful, less moody. "It was like he was a kid again."

Even during meal time, when Boomer prefers to be alone, he was bringing his food near people for company.

"He'd bring his food over sometimes and drop it by the edge of the cage where we're standing to say hi to us," he says. "Which none of my cats have ever done, none of my cats will ever do."

Urban to ring in new year

JOHN LAW
QMI Agency Niagara

This New Year's Eve, you'll need cowboy boots.

Grammy-winner Keith Urban will headline this year's free concert at Niagara Falls' Queen Victoria Park, anchoring the country's biggest televised year-end bash. It will be the sixth New Year's Eve show broadcast by Global, which announced the lineup during an *ET Canada* broadcast.

Also performing will be Nick Jonas (formerly of the Jonas Brothers), Canadian electronic pop artist Lights, and *Life of the Party* singer Shawn Mendes.

The two-and-a-half-hour broadcast starts at 10 p.m. Dec. 31, and is again hosted by *ET Canada*'s Cheryl Hickey, Rick Campanelli and Sargita Patella. Last year's show, headlined by Demi Lovato, had 526,000 more viewers than the previous year. Ratings peaked at midnight with more than 3.4 million viewers, which Global says was most viewed show in Canada at the time.

The Australian-born Urban, one of country music's biggest stars of the past decade, is one of the judges on *American Idol*. He has been married to actress Nicole Kidman since 2006.

Lights was one of the headliners for this year's S.C.E.N.E.

music festival in St. Catharines and is touring in support of her new album, *Little Machines*.

Mendes, a Teen Choice award winner this year, will be an opening act for Taylor Swift's 2015 world tour.

The annual concert costs about \$3 million to produce, with \$600,000 contributed by the local business community.

"It's a marquee event and New Year's Eve is one of the nights of highest demand for performers," said mayor Jim Diodati in September.

The city, along with Niagara Parks Commission, are event partners for the annual show.

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MIKE DIDAKTISTA/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Niagara Falls magician Greg Frewin's nine-year-old Siberian tiger Boomer is Niagara's newest cancer survivor. The cancer was near the rear hind leg of Boomer.

"We were there when he went down, we were there when he woke back up. I think he knew something was there, and later on knew something wasn't there."

After two months off, Boomer is back in on stage,

along with a video explaining his cancer ordeal. Frewin says he choked up making it, seeing pictures of Boomer as a cub and then photos of him on the operating table.

"You don't realize how much time you put into

(him)," he says. "It's like kids, you look back and go, 'Wow, they're in high school now.' You realize it's important, it's not just about the show, they're part of your life."

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to make it well established
and successful. Stephanie
grew up in a farm, and
loves the country life. She
is very energetic, she loves
to spend time with those
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and playing baseball
with her two sons. She is
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■ AISLE SEAT

Careful where you click in the Age of Spoilers

JOHN LAW
QMI Agency Niagara

I am picturing some guy walking out of a *Romeo and Juliet* matinee some 400 years ago, blabbing about what he just saw. "Dost thou believe it? They kill'd themselves in the end!"

To which some annoyed shopkeeper responds, "Still thy tongue! I hast not seen it yet!"

This was born the Age of the Spoiler.

Fast forward to this glorious modern age where a show about zombies is discussed and dissected online seconds after it airs. Often, as it airs. And if you miss it, you risk having it spoiled anywhere, anytime.

This applies to pretty

much every show now, which has created an angry Internet subculture. The Spoiler Whiner. Whatever was on TV last night, the Spoiler Whiner is there the next morning, asking — nay, demanding — you shut the hell up about it. "I TIVO'd it," they declare. "I was going to watch it after work and you just ruined it!"

I thought this was pretty amusing until the final season of *Breaking Bad*, when things really got nasty. You couldn't even insinuate what happened each episode without an army of spoiler police swarming you. I never ruined the show for anyone, but I did post an angry response to people constantly telling fans to shut up.

Basically, if you don't watch a show when it airs, don't berate the people who do. We aren't beholden to your schedule. Even better if you're waiting to download it illegally. Yes, I really care about ruining a show you're stealing.

Don't want to know what happened? Stay away from social media. It's where people, uh, socialize.

I think I lost 10 Facebook friends that night. It only got worse from there as 'event' shows like *True Detective* and *Fargo* offered weekly drama you simply had to discuss afterwards. And with each post, even ones tagged with 'spoiler warning,' the blowback got more nasty. Which just prompted people to spoil the show

more.

Mind you, there are two kinds of spoilers: The one that's inadvertent, like posting a pic of a character who died with the tagline 'Let's Discuss Last Night's Shocking Episode!' (I'm looking at you *Entertainment Weekly*), and the one who just wants to spill the beans because the Internet provides anonymous cover for your inner douchebag.

But the fact remains, if you don't watch as it airs, the onus is on you to avoid spoilers. TV shows are no different than sporting events — once it's done, it's out there. If you miss Sunday's football game, do you freak out when someone blurts out the score?

Last week, the war hit a weird new stage. Immediately after

Sunday's episode of *The Walking Dead*, AMC's Facebook page posted a photo of Daryl (Norman Reedus) carrying the body of the mid-season finale's major casualty. The problem? The show hadn't aired on the West Coast yet, and fans flipped out. AMC spoiled its own show, and not for the first time. Three years ago, the network ran ads for the Season 2 DVD before the season had finished airing. Among the bonus features was a look at "Shane's last episode." Oooops.

AMC issued an apology, saying there was "zero negative intent" to spoil the show. But where is the line drawn now? AMC knew there would be some breathless online banter about the episode, and wanted in on that. By the

time the show airs out west, social media has had a three-hour head-start.

If anyone else is talking about it, they reason, why not us? It's our bloody show!

I hear your pain, people. Sometimes, circumstances don't align with your schedule and you have to put it off, just don't be obnoxious about it.

Don't throw a hissy fit when you're playing catchup. I've been there, and gotten burned, but that's the risk when you invest in a show. After this week's brutal episode of *Sons of Anarchy*, I spent a hopeless day trying to avoid spoilers. Not a chance. The battle was lost by 9 a.m.

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PAIN – INJURIES – DYSFUNCTIONS



Grace Ren
R.M.T.

When you experience pain and dysfunctions from chronic ailments, it is important to seek professional who can help your body begin its healing process. Many people suffer needlessly before obtaining relief. Recovery is made effective with treatments of Craniosacral therapy, Myofascial release and Massage therapy. At Place to Heal, Registered Massage Therapist, Grace, in her 14 years of training and practice, combines Eastern and Western teachings, brings a wealth of knowledge to her work, helped many people achieve optimal results, examples:

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(2) A woman came with a large list of symptoms she was suffering: sensitivity to the sun, watering eyes, running nose, coughs with phlegm, difficulty breathing, and chest pain. She was given many antibiotics but symptoms recurred. After several treatments, her breathe easier, chest and abdomen pain were subsided, cough and phlegm were stopped, her energy had dramatically improved, and no need taking sleeping pills.



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Anxiety/Nervous	Hip/Knee pain	Shortness of breath
Arthritis/Gout pain	Hyper/hypothyroidism	Sinusitis/Nose bleeding
Asthma/Bronchitis	Irregular heart beating	Sjogren's syndrome
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Chest pain/tight	Panic attack/Palpitation	Urinary urgency/frequency
Constipation/Diarrhea	Parkinson's/Tremor	Vomiting/Nausea
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